United Nations A/C.1/52/PV.4

General Assembly

Official Records

First Committee

4th Meeting
Tuesday, 14 October 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Nkgowe . . . . . (Botswana)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 62-82 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Pearson (New Zealand): First let me congratulate you, Sir, on your appointment as Chairman of this Committee. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

I want to take the opportunity today to focus on our achievements as well as our unfinished agenda for disarmament. First, let me touch on the good news.

This has been an especially good year for global disarmament. We have seen a major overhaul of nuclear safeguards approved in Vienna, in May, which will bolster the International Atomic Energy Agency's ability to detect clandestine activities. This is a need, unfortunately, which has been shown still to exist in today's world.

In April this year, the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force. As the first treaty to outlaw an entire class of weapons while providing a verification system to ensure that parties comply with its provisions, this is a truly historic achievement in the field of disarmament and one New Zealand very much welcomes. We urge those countries that have not yet done so to ratify the treaty without delay.

Efforts to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention continue. The last round of Ad Hoc Group negotiations in Geneva made good progress towards this end. There is the prospect of a verification protocol being concluded by the middle of 1999 if the momentum of these negotiations is maintained and Governments lose no time next year in bringing them to an early conclusion.

The United States Senate gave its consent this year to the START II Treaty, which is another significant step forward. New Zealand joins all other countries in urging the Duma in Russia to endorse this Treaty soon. We also fully support moves to begin negotiations on START III, as agreed by Presidents Yeltsin and Clinton in March. START III would be a further huge step forward. We also think it is time for other nuclear weapon States to join this process.

We welcome the recent agreement for United States assistance to Russia on a Cooperative Threat Reduction programme and, in the context of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), the significant new measures that will have the effect of reducing conventional arms.

A major success this year has been the conclusion of negotiations to secure a ban on the production, use, transfer and stockpiling of anti-personnel mines. In less than a year, a new international norm banning an indiscriminate weapon has been established, which is perhaps something of a record in the field of arms control.

The Ottawa treaty has the full support of New Zealand. The humanitarian disaster caused by landmines has captured the attention of so many people who are at a loss to understand why these weapons have not been banned earlier.

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We want to see as many countries as possible sign the Ottawa treaty next month in Canada. We hope, too, that early ratification will lead to entry into force without delay. We urge those that may not yet be in a position to sign to work strenuously towards achieving this goal as soon as possible.

The Ottawa treaty is only the beginning of a process to rid the world of these indiscriminate killers. The task before all of us is enormous and it will require ongoing commitment and support from the world community. New Zealand has already been active in assisting with demining operations in a number of mine-affected countries. We shall continue to devote resources to this compelling need.

The Ottawa process has demonstrated that there are circumstances in which coalitions of like-minded countries are able to gather sufficient support to establish new international norms. It has shown, too, that the disarmament agenda can be moved forward when there is sufficient political will. And it has demonstrated that humanitarian needs do not have to be held hostage to vested interests when international imperatives demand otherwise.

Fortunately, there are steps that countries can pursue independently and collectively. New Zealand has been a longstanding supporter of the legal commitments that can contribute to international security through nuclear-weapon-free zones. This year we shall again be co-sponsoring a draft resolution that seeks to enhance political cooperation between the zones of the southern hemisphere, without restricting the rights of free passage. We urge representatives to support this year's text.

We note with satisfaction that seven countries have ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This remains a priority for New Zealand, not simply because it marks an end to testing, but because it is a step in the direction of nuclear disarmament. We hope that the number of ratifications will swell during the course of next year, and we urge all countries to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible. We are pleased that the Provisional Technical Secretariat, which was established earlier this year, has put itself on the front foot, and we are looking forward to the first phases of the international monitoring system being established. There should be no doubt that this treaty, and its States signatories, mean business.

We should all remain mindful of the importance of continuing to focus attention on conventional arms. The imperative here is no less urgent. We welcome the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, which offers some useful suggestions on the way forward. The report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms also contains some helpful ideas. I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for the Register, and the goal of expanding its scope.

Looking ahead, we hope that delegations will begin to focus soon on the next meeting of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference Preparatory Committee in Geneva, to ensure practical and constructive outcomes that will lead to the full implementation of the NPT provisions.

Let me now touch on some bad news.

Unfortunately, 1997 was not a good year for the Conference on Disarmament. Not only did it distinguish itself by failing to engage in a programme of work, it had difficulty agreeing on how to record this non-event in its annual report to this Committee. Equally worrying is that there are some in the Conference on Disarmament who seem unsure about exactly what a programme of work is.

These are not encouraging signs for a body that claims repeatedly to be the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament. If this deadlock and seemingly endless preoccupation with process continues during the next year, there is a risk that the credibility of the Conference on Disarmament will be called into question by the international community. And, as the United Nations moves towards budgeting based on outputs, a body that does not produce results will have a hard time convincing the General Assembly to continue to allocate it the considerable resources it currently enjoys.

This year, the Conference on Disarmament was able to reflect on questions such as its future membership, functioning and agenda. Disappointingly, these debates indicate that there is little disposition to entertain change. Claims that the Conference on Disarmament is a unique forum and should therefore remain immune to change must be dismissed.

To stay viable, the Conference on Disarmament must be open, without preconditions, to any new members that wish to exercise their commitment to arms control and disarmament. We consider there is no point in engaging in a debate in the Conference on Disarmament about what might or might not be its optimum size. And the Conference must assume more responsibility and

accountability for pursuing the calls for action that come from this Committee.

Despite these shortcomings, New Zealand remains committed to the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference has shown in the past that it is able to deliver; the challenge next year will be to prove that it is still capable of doing so. It is not a factory for mass-producing new disarmament instruments. But if there is to be any chance of progress next year, there will have to be a greater willingness on the part of some of its members, at both ends of the spectrum, to entertain movement and engage in compromise.

For New Zealand, the priorities are clear. The Conference on Disarmament must begin to address nuclear disarmament. It is simply not creditable for countries in this Committee to repeatedly endorse the need for nuclear disarmament in United Nations resolutions only to find that debate on these issues is suffocated in Geneva. Nor does it make any sense to the people we represent.

The time has come, we believe, for the Conference on Disarmament to demonstrate some leadership on nuclear issues. The International Court of Justice has confirmed that there is indeed an obligation to pursue and conclude negotiations leading to complete nuclear disarmament. Leadership in the Conference on Disarmament would help to build confidence and, in doing so, strengthen the non-proliferation norms.

Attempts in the past to package negotiations on nuclear issues into time-bound outcomes is not a productive way to proceed, however. Nor does New Zealand consider that progress on nuclear issues should be linked to progress in other areas of arms control. These are tactics for failure, in our view.

The way ahead is to probe the middle ground and to do so without indulging in preconditions. We should begin the process by opening a dialogue on nuclear issues in a manner that is both transparent and constructive. The challenge is to identify where like-minded countries can add value now to the process being undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States. A dialogue with these clear aims would support and not undermine efforts being pursued elsewhere.

A blueprint for action, some aspects of which can be undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States themselves, and some of which lend themselves to multilateral action in the Conference on Disarmament, already exists in the report of the Canberra Commission. This is a serious and compelling study. We commend it unreservedly. It proposes a number of logical and practical steps that would serve to enhance stability and security as we pursue our obligation to work towards a nuclear-free world. As a first, immediate step, we would endorse the Commission's call for the five nuclear-weapon States to commit themselves unequivocally to proceeding to a world without nuclear weapons.

The Commission's report goes to the heart of the issues we need to address in a dialogue and points us in a direction that would add real value to bilateral negotiations.

There has never been a better moment to open up a dialogue on nuclear issues. There is a discernible and growing trust and confidence between the major Powers. Nuclear weapons must not become a natural or inevitable feature of our society. The fact that they have not been used for 50 years does not mean that the risks are in any way lessened as time goes by. The longer we retain them, the greater the temptation for others to acquire them.

New Zealand is also ready to start work now on fissile cut-off negotiations in a way that recognizes the differing views on their scope. We continue to believe that such a step might be complemented by a register of stocks and by a verifiable instrument which ensures an end to the production of new weapons. Negotiations on a cut-off treaty, as agreed in the Shannon mandate for an Ad Hoc Committee in the Conference on Disarmament, is a challenge we can and should meet.

We have a weighty agenda before us and one that carries a heavy responsibility. This year has indeed been a significant one for moving forward, but it is not the moment to indulge in a pause. The challenge before us is to ensure that our achievements can be matched with same degree of commitment and movement next year and beyond.

Mr. Holum (United States of America): It is an honour once again to present the views of the United States on important international security issues before this Committee. My delegation congratulates you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to lead this body's work and pledges its full support.

In his address to the General Assembly last month, President Clinton spoke of the great tide of global integration and the resulting need for a new security strategy.

Security is an increasingly broad concept, involving not only defence but such issues as economics and the environment, science and information, combating drugs and terrorism, and education and human rights. But arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament remain vital components. The threats posed by weapons of mass destruction are far from being extinguished, and the consequences of miscalculation or deliberate acts can be horrific, as we know from the terrorist activities of a cult group armed with nerve gas in Japan, biological and toxin weapons in Iraq and persistent reports and risks of nuclear smuggling. And, with grim regularity, thousands of lives are lost in conventional conflicts.

These sobering realities should spur us. Each time we sit down to negotiate, we need to grasp all the progress we can. When we sit down, as I noted a year ago in the Committee, we should do so in a forum right for the given task. Today, I want to underscore another, increasingly pertinent condition for success — that, even as we aspire to the loftiest goals, we aim in the near term for the kind of focused, practical steps by which arms control is not just argued, but actually achieved. Let us not stand immobile, longing for the stars, but resolve to keep moving surely towards them, with deliberate strides.

The First Committee has a particular responsibility. It meets to help the international community establish those realistic goals and to provide the orientation needed to make real negotiating work possible.

The achievements of the past year well illustrate what can happen when realism prevails. In September 1996, the General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It does not make nuclear arms obsolete in a single stroke, but it will curb both horizontal and vertical proliferation and bring nuclear disarmament closer.

The enhanced review process for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is proceeding. With Brazil's most welcome decision to accede to the Treaty, the NPT will soon be just four nations short of universality. Meanwhile, advancing steadily among like-minded countries while accounting for the security requirements of others, nuclear-weapon-free zones now span entire continents.

The pace of nuclear disarmament is picking up, largely because the countries whose arms are directly involved have moved in bold but practical increments. START I reductions are ahead of schedule, and this year Russia and the United States have cleared away all remaining obstacles to Duma ratification of START II.

Concerns that Russia would have to build additional single-warhead missiles to maintain parity while destroying multiple-warhead ICBMs were answered by our Presidents at Helsinki in March and reiterated when Secretary Albright and Foreign Minister Primakov signed a Treaty Protocol here in New York last month. Immediately after START II is ratified, we and Russia will begin negotiations on further reductions deep enough to obviate any reason for such a build-up.

Concerns about compliance costs have been addressed in that Treaty Protocol by extending the START II elimination timetable to 2007. At the same time, the United States and Russia ensured that START II's security benefits will be realized as soon as possible through deactivation by the end of 2003 of the strategic nuclear-delivery vehicles slated for elimination.

Concerns about the viability of the 1972 Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems were also answered last month, when Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan and the United States signed agreements on Treaty succession and on demarcation between theatre and strategic defences.

Together with the new cooperative relationship between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Russia embodied in the Founding Act, these steps have set the stage for early Russian ratification and entry into force of START II, so that we can move on to even deeper reductions and more comprehensive controls on nuclear arms. In this Committee, the Russian and American delegations will urge adoption of a draft resolution supporting this process, upon which so much of our future security rests.

Also in the past year, the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force. We were proud to be able to deposit our instrument of ratification in April so that the United States could be among the original Parties.

On conventional arms, Parties to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe have agreed to aim for further reductions in Treaty-limited equipment. In Latin America, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) has proposed to help reduce the demand for arms through a legal framework for advance notification of major arms acquisitions.

How does this remarkable and diverse record of achievement guide us towards an even-more secure future? How can President Clinton's call to meet the challenge of global integration be pursued specifically in arms control? The answer is: by assigning the right task to the right venue and, as I want to amplify here today, by orienting our work less towards idealized visions and more towards practical results.

How does that apply to a number of key priorities? First, the practical approach calls for consolidating and realizing the full fruits of what we have already agreed, through entry into force and compliance, enforcement and implementation. This, after all, is where the practical value of arms control is realized: not only in ceremonies and signatures, but in threats averted, in weapons physically eliminated or avoided, in resources saved for better uses.

This means, for example, that our respective Governments need to secure approval for the ratifications necessary to make the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty a functioning and enduring reality. We commend Japan and the other States that have already ratified the Treaty. As he announced here on 22 September, President Clinton has transmitted the Treaty to the United States Senate for its early and favourable advice and consent.

Also to secure the benefits of existing agreements, commitments to organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are crucial. It falls to each country to apply the powerful new safeguards adopted in May to the real world, by upgrading bilateral agreements with the IAEA.

Arms-control compliance is served by the combination of deterrence, through verification and the risk of sanctions, and political commitment. The United Nations has a vital role in stimulating Governments and people everywhere to take compliance seriously. The United States draft resolution this year in this Committee will re-emphasize this point.

Secondly, in strategic arms control, a practical orientation means tangible steps ahead. Just as soon as START II is ratified, START III negotiations will be under way, aimed at ceilings of 2,000 to 2,500 warheads — leaving only about 20 per cent of peak cold-war levels. Indeed, President Clinton and President Yeltsin have already set a timetable of 2007 for this next dramatic disarmament step.

In a first for arms control, our Presidents have also agreed that START III will include the actual destruction not only of means of delivery, but of nuclear warheads themselves. It will also embrace transparency measures to ensure that nuclear material from destroyed warheads will never again be used in weapons.

We are also coming to terms with an alarming potential side effect of nuclear disarmament: the possibility that excess nuclear materials could be diverted, to serve nuclear ambitions elsewhere. The nuclear-weapon States have a particular responsibility to set aside rigid rules of secrecy in the storage and disposition of nuclear warheads and fissile materials, and to adopt fresh approaches to transparency and cooperation. We should aim for the fastest possible pace of irreversible reductions, and the safe and secure storage, and ultimate disposition, of the highly enriched uranium and plutonium recovered from dismantled arms.

Thirdly, another leading priority is the work of the ad hoc group to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Here, as we intensify our work next year, realism means most of all simply recognizing the core purpose of the effort, to protect all humanity from the depraved proposition that deadly diseases we have struggled to eradicate — plague, botulinum, anthrax and others — would be nurtured and deliberately inflicted as weapons of war. Open-ended technology transfer is neither the purpose of the exercise nor a legitimate price of success.

Fourthly, lest there be any doubt, let me stress that the United States has not given up on the negotiation of a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. In their 25 September statement, the Foreign Ministers of the permanent members of the Security Council reaffirmed their conviction that such negotiations should begin immediately and conclude at an early date. We all agree to pursue the process of nuclear disarmament. It is past time to agree to take the next logical multilateral step in that process.

Who can be against it? A cut-off in the production of fissile material will threaten no one. It will set in place an upper bound, a cap, on the amount of nuclear-weapons material in the world. How can we achieve reduced roles for nuclear weapons if we cannot even begin discussing a cap on their indispensable contents?

Fifthly, we also have much more practical work to do to end the civilian carnage from anti-personnel landmines. The United States worked diligently leading up to and in

Oslo to find an outcome to the Ottawa process that would be compatible with its security requirements. What emerged was a result we can welcome but cannot join. The Ottawa Convention would rule out military options we cannot now do without: to use anti-personnel landmines of types or in ways, I would stress, that are not part of the humanitarian threat of long-lived, undetectable mines scattered in unmarked fields.

All countries in a position to do so should sign the Ottawa Convention. Then I urge that we turn to the critical and challenging landmine work that still lies ahead.

Worldwide, for the foreseeable future, there will be many more people, and many more mines, outside the Ottawa Convention than inside. Now that its content and likely membership is settled, the question should be how, given these realities, can we best reduce the loss of human life to anti-personnel landmines? Clearly, the answer is that each process should make its maximum contribution, so that their sum will be greater than the result in any single forum.

On this issue the Conference on Disarmament unfortunately has shown that it is prepared neither for long strides nor for a quick start. To the extent the Conference on Disarmament was seen as competition to Ottawa, at least one impediment should be behind us. In any event, let us recall that the Conference does include all the major historic landmine producers and exporters, and many members believe it should undertake anti-personnel landmine disarmament. The United States will strongly support Conference on Disarmament negotiations on anti-personnel landmines, beginning with a ban on exports next year.

We also urge prompt ratification of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Amended Protocol II, which, again, includes the major landmine States not part of the Ottawa process, and deals specifically with long-lived, non-detectable mines. The humanitarian benefit can be immense.

As we deal with mines not yet emplaced we must, of course, also be mindful of a distinct bottom line — that every mine removed from the ground is another innocent victim potentially saved. The United States currently spends almost as much on demining as the rest of the world combined. President Clinton has directed that we significantly increase our demining efforts, beginning with a 25 per cent increase in funds next year.

These two issues, the fissile material cut-off and anti-personnel landmines, underscore the dangers to disarmament of the approach opposite to what I advocate here. The Conference on Disarmament is in the grip of a linkage virus. It not only insists on maximum results on one subject, but insists that all other progress must cease until we agree to that step — a timetable for elimination of all nuclear weapons.

I will risk repetition to state our view that the Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating body, not a debating society, and negotiations in Geneva should address matters of global reach that require broadly representative participation.

But the linkage disease is impossibility squared — a proposal in effect to stall the proven step-by-step approach by the United States and Russia that is in fact bringing nuclear disarmament closer, and then to drag all possible progress on other issues into the same morass. That linkage virus has paralysed the Conference on Disarmament. We will see if it proves to be fatal.

Finally, realism should prevail in the ways in which we organize ourselves to pursue arms control. To function well over time, every organization must be prepared to adapt to change.

The United Nations Secretariat's support of arms control should be reorganized and reformed. The Centre for Disarmament Affairs should revitalize its support for the work of the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament, and be prepared to support new tasks.

If I may speak parochially for a moment, the United States is also reorganizing its arms-control operations, by integrating the 38-year-old agency that I have been privileged to lead, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, into the Department of State.

This step, I want to assure the Committee, is intended to and will enhance the role of arms control and non-proliferation in United States foreign policy. President Clinton and Secretary Albright have agreed that independent policy advocacy and compliance reviews will be preserved through reporting from the Department's senior arms-control official directly to the President and the national-security leadership. At the same time, the Agency's expertise and operational resources will be combined with those of the State Department in a new set of bureaux, to give these issues even greater prominence in our diplomacy and national-security strategy. The plan thus

protects the core value of an independent agency, while capturing the benefits, in both efficiency and efficacy, of combining forces with a strengthened and revitalized Department of State.

I have sought to sketch out an arms control approach to global security as the decade, century and millennium draw to a close. This approach is avowedly practical in design. It is rooted in the conviction, reinforced by all our experience, that taking one logical step after another is the best way to achieve long-term success.

Our work has never been more vital. Yet major parts of it are stalled, ensnared in a combination of outmoded political alignments and new techniques of diversion and delay. Let us break free of these shackles. Let us turn down our megaphones, roll up our sleeves, and get back to work.

Mr. Hayashi (Japan): May I begin, Sir, by extending, on behalf of the Japanese delegation, my warm congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee of the General Assembly during its fifty-second session. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you lead the important work of this Committee.

Since the cold-war era, the international community has made remarkable progress in the field of disarmament with, for example, the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. On the other hand, however, we are witnessing numerous regional armed conflicts and the danger of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It should also be noted that the Conference on Disarmament was unable this year to overcome member States' divergence of views in its efforts to define the future direction of disarmament.

Japan, as a peace-loving country which upholds its three non-nuclear principles — not to produce nuclear weapons, not to possess them, and not to permit their introduction into its territory — and which maintains its military forces strictly for self-defence purposes, regards its contributions to world disarmament efforts as one of the most important pillars of its foreign policy. As Japan has expressed on various occasions, we must not waste precious time engaging in sterile arguments. Indeed, the time has come when it is incumbent upon each country to offer the international community its wisest counsel and to take action for the steady advancement of disarmament. With the development of the mass media and the growing influence of civil society, including the growth of non-governmental organizations, international public opinion now has the power to spur progress in disarmament. Idealism that pays little attention to reality cannot advance disarmament, but neither can realism which is not grounded in ideals. Japan, while upholding the lofty ideal of complete disarmament, will continue to appeal to the international community to aim at steady progress in disarmament through concrete measures, taken one by one.

Based on this view, Japan continues to make the utmost effort to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. As part of these efforts, Japan intends to reintroduce in the First Committee this year a draft resolution aimed at achieving the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons, a resolution on which it has taken the initiative since 1994. My delegation is grateful for and encouraged by the overwhelming support which this resolution has gained among member States, and it believes this resolution has contributed to the consolidation throughout the international community of the view that nuclear weapons should eventually be abolished, once and for all.

At the same time, Japan intends to buckle down in its effort to address the issue of conventional arms, particularly anti-personnel landmines and small arms, which every day pose very real threats to human life and regional stability.

Japan attaches great importance to the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating body in the disarmament field. As I noted earlier, because of the divergence of views, the Conference unfortunately could not embark upon concrete work this year. It was particularly regrettable that the Conference was unable to reach an agreement on the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee on a cut-off treaty which would ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. This failure is especially disappointing in view of the fact that the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), stipulated that after the CTBT the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations on such a treaty would be the most important measure to be taken to advance nuclear disarmament, and also since the majority of member States in the Conference on Disarmament this year did not object to the commencement of negotiations.

This year the Conference demonstrated, quite unwittingly, that disarmament cannot be promoted through confrontation. My delegation strongly hopes that next year the Conference will be able to forge a realistic compromise so that it can make substantial progress in nuclear disarmament.

Japan, which is one of the strongest advocates for the elimination of nuclear weapons, has repeatedly insisted that if we are to make progress towards this goal, it is imperative that we make steady and cumulative efforts through realistic and concrete measures. As Foreign Minister Obuchi stated before the General Assembly last month, Japan, together with other like-minded countries, will continue to emphasize the importance of this approach.

While remaining committed to the immediate commencement of negotiations on a cut-off treaty, Japan believes it would be worthwhile to commence immediately discussions on at least the technical aspects of such a treaty. This could serve as a means of paving the way for negotiations on the treaty per se. My delegation wishes to recall that in the case of the CTBT, the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Cooperative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events proceeded with technical work over an extended period of time prior to the commencement of CTBT negotiations. In the case of the cut-off treaty, it is expected that the negotiations will involve exceedingly complex technical issues which will also be closely related to political decisions. Thus the pigeonholing of technical issues in advance will be all the more useful in our work for this treaty.

In addition to the issue of nuclear disarmament, it is important that the Conference on Disarmament grapple with issues related to conventional weapons disarmament, particularly the question of anti-personnel landmines. My delegation believes the Conference can make a significant contribution in this area because it has both the participation of key countries and the expertise and negotiating experience to forge a treaty which takes into account each country's security concerns as well as humanitarian concerns.

Permit me to take this opportunity to present the comprehensive approach that Japan has taken on the issue of anti-personnel landmines. In the context of international efforts to address this issue, Japan has identified four important tasks: first, to contribute to international efforts to achieve a total ban on anti-personnel landmines while promoting legally binding controls over their use and transfer; secondly, to assist demining efforts by the United Nations and other international organizations; thirdly, to develop technology for mine detection and clearance; and fourthly, to assist victims of landmines.

Concerning the first task, Japan shares the international community's objective of banning and eliminating anti-personnel landmines. In June of this year Japan ratified the amended Protocol II of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, becoming the fifth country to do so, in the belief that the early entry into force of the Protocol is an important part of international efforts to address the issue of anti-personnel landmines.

Japan appreciates the Ottawa process, and regards it as an important step by the international community towards the banning of anti-personnel landmines. The Government of Japan is now in the process of deciding whether to sign the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which will be opened for signature at the Ottawa conference; but whether it does so or not, it is convinced that the international community must continue to strive to achieve the universal and effective elimination of anti-personnel landmines. In this connection, Japan is of the view that we need to strengthen the efforts in the Conference on Disarmament towards the early start of negotiations on a treaty.

In addition to working towards a legal ban on anti-personnel landmines, Japan has been making vigorous efforts to address the problems such weapons cause. In addition to making financial contributions to demining efforts and assistance to victims, Japan held the Tokyo Conference on Anti-Personnel Landmines last March, where many participating countries explored ways and means of clearing mines and extending assistance to victims. In so doing, Japan sought to strengthen international cooperation in this important area; it intends to continue its efforts in this regard.

Small arms are another issue in the field of conventional weapons that demands the attention of the international community. Unlike the case of weapons of mass destruction, there are no agreed global norms or standards regarding the control of small arms. It is these weapons that are used most often in the regional conflicts that have been erupting with increasing frequency since the end of the cold war, taking a tremendous toll in human life and causing massive flows of refugees in many parts of the

world. The accumulation of small arms is not in itself a cause of conflict, but it can intensify and prolong conflicts, leading to a violent rather than a peaceful resolution of a conflict and generating a vicious cycle of greater insecurity, which in turn leads to increased demands for and use of such weapons.

The General Assembly has adopted several resolutions relating to the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons. In 1995, it adopted resolution 50/70 B, entitled "Small arms", on which Japan took the initiative, with a view to conducting a full-scale study of the issue. Based on that resolution, the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms was established last year; this summer it adopted by consensus its report, which the Secretary-General has submitted to the General Assembly at this session. Japan welcomes these developments and intends to submit a draft resolution on this issue in the First Committee later this year. It is our earnest hope that the international community will maintain the momentum that has been generated and will continue to examine measures to solve this problem.

Let me mention one more issue in the domain of conventional weapons, namely transparency in armaments. We welcome in this regard the adoption of the report by the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms on the operation and further development of the Register. Japan highly values the role the Register is playing in preventing the excessive accumulation of conventional arms which can cause regional instability, and we will continue our efforts to further enhance the Register so that it can respond effectively to the challenges that are confronting it.

Now I would like to turn our attention to the tasks that lie ahead in view of the recent developments that have been made in the field of nuclear-weapons disarmament. The first relates to the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was adopted at the General Assembly last year by an overwhelming majority. I would like to note that as of today as many as 148 Member States have signed the Treaty. In our view, this is proof of the strong desire throughout the international community to put an end to nuclear testing and to promote nuclear disarmament.

Japan, for its part, deposited its instrument of ratification on 8 July this year, thus becoming the fourth State party to the Treaty. I might add that among the 44 countries which must ratify the Treaty in order for it to enter into force, Japan is the first to have done so. My Government hopes that there will be a strong show of support by the international community for the entry into force of the Treaty, and that every country will ratify it without delay. In particular, however, we would like to call upon those countries which have expressed opposition to the Treaty to reconsider their positions so that the Treaty can enter into force at the earliest possible date. In the meantime, Japan is confident that in the light of the Treaty's adoption and of the widespread support it enjoys, nuclear testing will never again be conducted anywhere in the world.

In addition to efforts for the early entry into force of the Treaty, it is important to prepare a smooth implementation mechanism. We therefore note with satisfaction that the provisional technical secretariat commenced its work in Vienna last March, based on the agreement reached by the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. Secondly, subsequent to the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995, the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the year-2000 review conference was held in April this year at United Nations Headquarters. At that meeting not only procedural but also substantive matters were considered, and a report containing recommendations for the next meeting of the Preparatory Committee was adopted. My delegation believes that this constitutes a good start for the newly strengthened NPT review process, which is qualitatively different from the review process prior to 1995.

Indeed, my Government regards the NPT review process as providing a valuable forum for the promotion of nuclear disarmament. It thus took the initiative at the General Assembly last year to introduce a draft resolution entitled "Nuclear disarmament with a view to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons", adopted as resolution 51/45 G, which called upon all States parties to the Treaty to make their best efforts to ensure the success of the first Preparatory Committee meeting. To follow up the resolution, the Government of Japan hosted a nuclear-disarmament seminar at Kyoto in December 1996, providing a venue for prior consultations in anticipation of meetings of the Preparatory Committee.

At the first Preparatory Committee meeting, nuclear-weapon States provided information on the measures they had taken for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. This effort on the part of nuclear-weapon States was of great interest to Japan, because we believe that increased transparency in the nuclear disarmament process among

nuclear-weapon States will enhance mutual confidence between those States and non-nuclear weapon States. We expect that, building upon the achievements of the first meeting this year, further progress will be made at the second Preparatory Committee meeting to be held in Geneva next spring.

Concerning the NPT, I would be remiss if I did not refer to the decision announced in June by President Cardoso that Brazil would join the NPT. We commend Brazil for this extremely important decision, which will further enhance the universality of the NPT, and we hope that the Brazilian Congress will ratify the Treaty as soon as possible. I wish on this occasion to reiterate Japan's strong hope that, in view of the importance of the Treaty for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the very few countries remaining outside the Treaty will also make a courageous decision to join the regime, so that the Treaty enjoys universal adherence.

Thirdly, as regards the arrangements between the United States and the Russian Federation for the reduction of their nuclear arsenals — an issue which has a direct impact on nuclear disarmament — we welcome the shared commitment shown at the summit meeting in Helsinki in March to engage in further talks on the reduction of strategic forces in the context of the START process. We look forward to the commencement of negotiations of a START III treaty, in concrete terms, as the fruit of this commitment. In this connection, Japan strongly hopes that Russia will ratify START II as soon as possible and that it will lead to further reductions of nuclear weapons in the context of START III.

Let me now touch upon non-nuclear weapons of mass destruction. Japan welcomed the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention on 29 April this year, and also the fact that the United States and China became original States Parties when they ratified the Convention on April 25. We would like to call upon those countries which have not yet done so to likewise accede to the Convention at the earliest possible date.

As regards implementation, Japan observes in good faith its obligations under the Convention. It has submitted various declarations and received inspections, including inspections of its Schedule 1 facility. We are also making sincere efforts to resolve the issue of so-called abandoned chemical weapons in China, including the establishment of a joint working group with China.

As for the task of formulating a verification protocol in order to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention, it is encouraging that a rolling text was submitted to the ad hoc group by the Chairman this summer. Japan actively participates in the negotiations in the hope that an effective and efficient verification mechanism will be established.

Last but not least, the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament are making significant contributions to regional confidence-building. Japan appreciates in particular the contributions of the Kathmandu Centre, one of the facilities in Asia and the South Pacific. Referred to as the Kathmandu process, its activities enhance dialogue and promote confidence in the region. Japan will continue to extend assistance in support of its activities.

Let me conclude by returning to the message that I tried to convey at the outset. Japan attaches great importance to moving the disarmament process forward in a concrete manner, even on a gradual, step-by-step basis. It is Japan's firm belief that the only way in which we can promote action towards disarmament is to pursue a middle ground, taking into account the actual circumstances surrounding the issue. We hope that the deliberations by the First Committee will contribute to moving the international community a step forward along the path towards disarmament. I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that it is an endeavour to which Japan pledges its full support.

Mr. Moher (Canada): May I join with others, Sir, in welcoming your chairmanship of this First Committee. Canada certainly will do the maximum possible to work with you and to cooperate during this session. It is also a pleasure for us to see so many other friends of Canada on the front bench with you.

The reform of the United Nations, and the international system it symbolizes and underpins, is vital to our efforts to build a world with fewer conflicts, less suffering, more peace and prosperity for all. The reform agenda, as defined in the courageous package of initiatives proposed by the Secretary-General, is strongly supported by Canada.

This approach to fundamentally reforming the United Nations to meet new challenges in new ways must permeate the work of the General Assembly. Indeed, we believe that this spirit of reform and the will to common action should be channelled immediately and directly into the discussions, negotiations and decisions of the First Committee.

We have an opportunity — and indeed a responsibility — to create a new approach to the work of the First Committee and to set a new standard for common, practical action. My delegation will be working in this spirit.

Momentum, once lost, is difficult to regain. Inertia runs the risk of defeating our best intentions. Endless repetitions of "movement on my terms only" will not produce the results we all seek — the results that the world expects of us.

The Canadian delegation does not believe that an inability to make substantive progress in some areas of the arms control and disarmament agenda during the past year signals the collapse or uselessness of specific forums. Nor should that lack of progress suggest a so-called end-of-history argument — that is, that we have come to the end of the disarmament road. There is far too much still to be done to consider that our work is somehow completed or that we have exhausted all possible avenues for action. It is also too easy simply to blame our institutions and structures. Our inability to act on certain areas of the disarmament agenda in the past year underlines the urgent need to mobilize the political will and the creativity necessary for us to move forward.

Let us look to our priorities for action. First, we must continue to pursue effective measures to reduce and eliminate weapons of mass destruction. Important progress has been made in this past year. But much more remains to be done. We must pursue the universality of existing instruments, we must ensure their effective implementation and, for example, we must reach agreement on a protocol that will enhance the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention. While the Chemical Weapons Convention has entered into force, remaining challenges must be overcome.

In the nuclear field, we have seen some important progress this year. Just last month, on the bilateral level, the United States of America and the Russian Federation announced initiatives taken in the areas of strategic security and nuclear security that will make a positive and constructive contribution to the global nuclear arms control and disarmament agenda.

At the global level, the first session of the Preparatory Committee of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review process took steps towards confirming the will conveyed by States parties to make this a strengthened, comprehensive and qualitatively different review process. We were pleased that we were able to begin to address substantive issues at the first session. Canada was also honoured last year to be able to contribute to the successful early decision to begin the implementation of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The CTBT and the important steps taken to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system are proof that the global community can act when it chooses. For its part, Canada's disarmament implementing agency is working to ensure that Canada can ratify the CTBT within the coming year.

But these actions, positive as they are, represent only a fraction of what is needed if we are to continue to make progress to reduce and to eliminate nuclear weapons. The START process must be revitalized and broadened to include other nuclear-weapon States — promises and intentions must be converted into actions; the nuclear-weapon States must progressively and dynamically demonstrate their fulfilment of their NPT obligation to negotiate in good faith and to conclude negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament; the NPT review process must continue to be a qualitatively different and enhanced exercise; and the Conference on Disarmament must overcome its current stalemate and move forward decisively and responsibly on nuclear disarmament and a fissile material cut-off treaty. There is also much to be done on other key issues, including enhanced nuclear security assurances and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Canada for its part recognizes and accepts the potential and the limits of multilateral efforts to reduce and to eliminate nuclear weapons. It is in this context that we have acknowledged the special responsibilities of the nuclear-weapon States. But this does not mean that we abdicate our engagement in this field. Like all other members of the international community, Canada has national interests at stake. We therefore expect the nuclear-weapon States to meet their responsibilities and to deliver on their commitment. For our part, we will continue to contribute through the NPT, the CTBT and the IAEA, and through the negotiation — hopefully soon — of an effective fissile material cut-off treaty. We also continue to believe that a mechanism, perhaps an ad hoc committee, should be established in the Conference on Disarmament for the purpose of substantive discussion of nuclear disarmament issues with a view to identifying if and when further multilateral measures might be negotiated. For this to happen, it is our fervent hope that the necessary combination of political judgement and will on all sides can be found in the near future.

We are all familiar with the argument that progress in a wide range of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation fields will enhance international security and contribute to the framework in which all of our goals can be achieved. While we do not accept the view put forward by some that vast and comprehensive agreement across the board is a precondition for specific progress — for example, towards the elimination of nuclear weapons — we are committed to achieving progress wherever and whenever possible.

One further domain where we believe we should act is that of outer space. Canada has specifically proposed in the Conference on Disarmament that an ad hoc committee be established to negotiate a convention banning the weaponization of outer space. We believe that this is a propitious moment to finally get work under way to prevent weapons being placed into space. We hope that our interest in beginning negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament — an interest which we know is shared by many countries — will receive careful consideration and action.

As our Minister of Foreign Affairs indicated in his speech to the General Assembly, Canada continues to be deeply concerned about conventional disarmament questions. Our efforts in this field are governed by three considerations: the need for greater transparency; the value of and necessity for dialogue; and the exercise of restraint by all States. These mutually reinforcing considerations can promote effective international cooperation. However, there is still no general global consensus on the need to act decisively on the conventional arms agenda. We believe we need to generate that consensus.

While we were pleased — perhaps "relieved" is a better word — that this year the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms reached agreement on a report, its consensus is focused on a minimalist set of conclusions. It reflects but a fraction of the imagination and ideas that emerged during the discussions. Several recommendations in the report will lead to greater clarity in reporting and thus enhance transparency. But the Register will continue to fall far short of its potential as long as military holdings and procurement through national production remain outside its purview and States erratically and sporadically submit their data. Canada continues to believe that all States should report to the United Nations Register. We regret that several regions of the world remain noticeably under-represented in reporting.

On the positive side, over time a bank of valuable data and information on the conventional arms trade is emerging. States should seek new opportunities to pursue dialogue on the implications of this data, with a view to the exercise of real restraint in the arms trade. Canada certainly believes greater use could be made of this Committee and of the Conference on Disarmament in this regard.

Canada also applauds the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms for a report that we regard as a balanced and reasonable step towards addressing the deleterious effects of excessive and destabilizing accumulations of small arms and light weapons. We support the report's recommendations, especially those relating to peacekeeping mandates and the destruction of weapons as part of post-conflict peace-building.

We encourage this Committee to endorse unanimously the Panel's report and to identify suitable follow-on work, bearing in mind that the report relates closely to the on-going efforts in the United Nations Disarmament Commission on the "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures". In Canada's view, effective disarmament, particularly of small arms, as well as the demobilization and reintegration measures concerning ex-combatants, should be considered as part of an integrated approach by United Nations agencies, donor groups and non-governmental organizations towards addressing the peace-building challenges in post-conflict situations.

In Canada's view, there is no better way of reminding ourselves of what the international community is truly capable of achieving than by reflecting on the dynamism and extraordinary work which culminated last month in Oslo, Norway, with the global community — Governments, non-governmental organizations and international organizations — pulling together to achieve a convention to ban the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines. This experience proves that new approaches, new conviction, new coalitions of the like-minded — Governments and civil society working together — drawn from all corners of the world, can set a goal, develop an agenda and produce clear and rapid results.

Last year not one voice was raised in dissent when the General Assembly urged States to pursue vigorously an effective, legally-binding international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel

mines, with a view to completing the negotiation as soon as possible. Such an agreement was reached last month in Oslo, thanks to an extraordinary partnership of countries from all regions of the world, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and countless others. It was the product of a series of international meetings — in Vienna and Bonn, and the Brussels Conference in June — where ideas were refined and precision was given to the elements of a text, the draft of which was so well and so meticulously prepared by the Government of Austria. Norway generously provided the ideal venue for the negotiation of the Treaty. South African leadership, through Ambassador Jacob Selebi, who chaired the negotiations and drove them forward with consummate skill, provided — in less than three weeks — a treaty which clearly and unambiguously establishes a new international norm against the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

At this point, Canada wishes to pay particular tribute to, and welcome the Nobel Prize given to, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and to Jody Williams. Their inspiring and committed work on this vital issue more than merits this wonderful recognition.

Our work does not end there. The Oslo text will be opened for signature on 3 and 4 December in Ottawa. We invite all countries to join us in becoming original signatories. We hope that those unable to sign in Ottawa in December will act to put in place unilateral restrictions on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines. We also hope that all countries will ratify the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Amended Protocol II. Canada will present its instruments of ratification for the Amended Protocol II in the coming weeks.

So the agreement reached in Oslo is just the first step. It constitutes a promise to future generations and a powerful humanitarian commitment to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by these weapons. This is why we will use the opportunity of the Ottawa meeting, from 2 to 4 December, to gather experts from Governments, non-governmental organizations and international organizations to pull together an agenda for action. By doing so, we hope to ensure the Treaty's early entry into force and universal adherence, along with its effective implementation, in particular with regard to the eradication of anti-personnel mines and in the rehabilitation and economic and social integration of the countless victims around the world. Canada will continue to work with this extraordinary global coalition to fulfil the commitments made in the Convention and to meet the immense, continuing challenges posed by anti-personnel mines.

It is all too clear that we have not reached the end of the road in disarmament matters. We can continue to build on past progress; we can deliver nationally, bilaterally and multilaterally on our commitments; we can mobilize new and creative ways to achieve our goals.

While we need to consider — openly and frankly — the future of the First Committee in the context of other disarmament forums, several preliminary comments might be considered. We should ensure that sessions of the First Committee are well-focused and cost efficient as well as oriented towards substantive work. Canada continues to attach fundamental importance to strengthening the Conference on Disarmament as the multilateral forum for the substantive discussion of ongoing disarmament issues and for negotiations on agreed issues in that field. We should clarify the role of the Disarmament Commission, and any call for additional forums and/or multilateral consideration of disarmament issues should be evaluated in the context of those factors.

We can reform our institutions and processes to enhance our achievements. We look forward to working cooperatively with all here to make further substantive progress. For our part, Canada will be contributing to these efforts by several specific actions during this session. First, we will explore the prospects for greater consensus on a fissile material cut-off treaty negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament; secondly, we will put forward with Poland a draft resolution on the Chemical Weapons Convention, which we hope and believe will be adopted by consensus. Thirdly, a further Canadian draft resolution on verification, building on our earlier efforts, will also be advanced for adoption by consensus. Fourthly, in partnership with countries from every region of the world, we will devote a major effort to securing the widest possible co-sponsorship and support for a draft resolution designed to move the Ottawa process forward from Oslo to a successful signing ceremony in Ottawa this December.

I should like to break away from my prepared text to make a few additional comments on that last point. All delegations are aware that a draft resolution has been circulated in both Geneva and New York. We have additional copies available. I wish to emphasize that draft resolution has been deliberately prepared to be as single-focused and non-confrontational as possible. The draft was prepared by a small group of delegations; it is therefore

already a shared effort. Moreover, approximately 40 delegations have already committed to sponsor. We sincerely thank those that have moved so quickly in this respect. We welcome further sponsors as soon as possible. An open meeting of interested delegations will take place on Tuesday, 21 October, to move this process forward. Confirmation of that meeting will appear in the *Journal* on Friday morning. Our collective intention — that is, the intention of Canada and of its friends on this issue — is to submit the draft with as many initial sponsors as possible by the middle of next week. While the list of sponsors will, of course, remain open thereafter, we would like the initial list to be as comprehensive as possible. These points being made, Canada will, of course, continue to give the most careful consideration to all other proposals brought before us.

May I conclude these comments by suggesting that the Committee can mobilize to take steps that will lead to a renewed approach to action, and to finding the political will and realism necessary in order to meet the many challenges on the global disarmament agenda.

Mr. Sha Zukang (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Please permit me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that, given your outstanding talent and rich diplomatic experience, you will fulfil this mission with distinction. At the same time, I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Sychou for his contribution as Chairman of the First Committee during the last session.

The international situation continues to experience profound changes. Relations between the big Powers are undergoing major and profound adjustments. The overall strength of the developing countries and the trend towards multipolarity, as well as factors conducive to world peace are growing. The international situation as a whole is moving towards relaxation. Peace, cooperation and development have become the main themes of our times. Against such a backdrop, international arms control and disarmament have gained in depth and width over the last year.

The Chemical Weapons Convention has entered into force. The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization has started its work. The area covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones has further expanded. Negotiations to enhance the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention have made steady progress. The Model Protocol Additional to Safeguards Agreements between State(s) has been concluded. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva is considering in a serious and in-depth manner a new negotiation agenda.

Nonetheless, peace has not prevailed in the world. The cold-war mentality still exists. Hegemonism and power politics continue to threaten world peace and stability. Attempts to interfere under various excuses in the internal affairs of other countries, expand military blocs and strengthen military alliances, as well as research on development and the deployment of missile defence systems which negatively affect strategic security and stability, and the proliferation of these systems to other countries and regions, are not conducive to the maintenance of international peace and security. They also run counter to the international trend towards peace, cooperation and development.

The Chinese delegation is of the view that with the further progress in international arms control and disarmament, and particularly with the conclusion and implementation of a number of international arms control and disarmament legal instruments, it is obviously highly necessary to strengthen the international non-proliferation efforts. We are pleased to note that the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the completion of negotiations on the Additional Protocol to Safeguards Agreements, the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the negotiations to enhance the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention have enhanced and will further enhance international non-proliferation. It is easy to see that all the above non-proliferation regimes, established on the basis of relatively broad participation, while taking into account the needs of peaceful uses as much as possible, enjoy relatively solid mass support. They will therefore be relatively effective and have vitality.

At the same time, we cannot but recognize that during the cold-war period a small number of developed countries, with the purpose of deterring their opponents, set up a series of so-called non-proliferation mechanisms and arrangements. Although these mechanisms and arrangements may have played a certain role in non-proliferation, they are discriminatory and exclusive in nature and non-transparent in practice. As those international legal instruments are already in place, or are about to be put in place, maintaining or even enhancing these discriminatory and exclusive mechanisms and arrangements clashes with the relevant international legal instruments. What is even worse is that they will continue

to impede the social and economic development of all countries, the developing countries in particular.

What is most serious is that some countries, under the pretext of preventing proliferation, interfere in and block the legitimate and normal economic and technological exchanges of countries, particularly the developing countries. They have even adopted double standards. On the one hand, they exert pressure and even impose or threaten to impose sanctions against other countries under the name of non-proliferation. On the other hand, they themselves engage in massive sales of advanced weapons and equipment to sensitive regions, infringing upon the national sovereignty of other countries and damaging regional peace and stability.

The Chinese Government adheres to Mr. Deng Xiaoping's thinking on diplomatic endeavours and firmly pursues an independent foreign policy of peace. China determines its position and policy on international affairs on the merits of each case, by proceeding from the fundamental interests of the people of China and of the world as a whole. China will never yield to any outside pressure or enter into an alliance with any big Power or group of countries, nor will it establish any military bloc, participate in the arms race or seek military expansion. China is a staunch force safeguarding world peace and regional stability.

China has all along advocated genuine disarmament. It stood for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, the prohibition of the development of outer space weapons, and the reduction of conventional weapons to a rational level.

At the fifteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, held last month, General Secretary Jiang Zemin announced that on the basis of the reduction of 1 million troops in the 1980s, China would further reduce its military forces by 500,000 troops within the next three years. This is another significant and concrete disarmament step taken by the Chinese Government unilaterally.

As a State Party to the NPT, China faithfully fulfils its obligation under the Treaty. As a nuclear-weapon State, China was the first to sign the CTBT, after the host country of the United Nations, and participated in an active and responsible manner in the preparatory work for the Treaty's entry into force. Since the first day of its possession of nuclear weapons, China has undertaken not to be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time or under any circumstances, and China is the only nuclear-weapon State which has undertaken unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. It has consistently supported the efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones by agreements freely arrived at among the States concerned.

China ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention in April this year. To date, China has received two initial inspections by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

China has fully implemented its obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention, and is actively participating in the negotiations on enhancing the effectiveness of the Convention.

China actively supports the international non-proliferation efforts, resolutely opposes the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and strictly abides by the provisions of the international treaties to which it is a State party.

China adheres to three principles on nuclear export: first, the export should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes; secondly, the export should be subject to the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); and thirdly, the export should not be transferred to a third country without China's consent. China does not provide assistance to nuclear facilities not subject to the IAEA safeguards. In September this year, the Chinese Government promulgated the regulations on nuclear export control and has applied for membership in the Zangger Committee.

China attaches importance to the control and management of the trade in sensitive chemicals. It has formulated a number of regulations and lists of chemicals in accordance with the relevant international conventions.

Everybody is talking about the issue of a total ban of anti-personnel landmines. Is this issue more important than the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons and outer space weapons? That remains an open question. However, I should like to take this opportunity to elaborate the views of the Chinese delegation on the issue of anti-personnel landmines.

China has taken a constructive and realistic attitude in the negotiation and conclusion of the amendment to the landmines Protocol and is considering ratifying the Protocol at an early date. In April last year, China undertook to

implement a moratorium on its export of anti-personnel landmines, which do not conform to the technical criteria contained in the amended Protocol before its entry into force. China has also done a lot of work in mine-clearance and has provided demining assistance to other developing countries.

The Chinese delegation holds that the anti-personnel landmine is a weapon of a purely defensive nature and that the humanitarian concerns surrounding it arise exclusively for two reasons: the shortcomings of old-type anti-personnel landmines and their indiscriminate use, and inadequate post-conflict demining efforts. The elimination of civilian casualties should be our sole objective. The fundamental way to achieve that objective should be to clear the old-type anti-personnel landmines sown in the past, rectify their shortcomings and ban the further use of that type of landmine.

China is in favour of imposing strict and feasible restrictions on anti-personnel landmines and their use, with a view to achieving the objective of an ultimate ban in a step-by-step manner. In order to meet its legitimate defence requirements, China cannot but reserve its legitimate right to use anti-personnel landmines on its own territories before alternative means are found and defensive capabilities established. China can only accept an international agreement on anti-personnel landmines that fully accommodates its aforementioned security concerns.

China has always pursued an independent foreign policy of peace. It has never engaged in overseas aggression, nor does it have any intention of using landmines in other countries. Should China use anti-personnel landmines in legitimate circumstances, it would be entirely for the purpose of defending against foreign military intervention and aggression, safeguarding its national unification and territorial integrity, and ensuring a peaceful life for its own people.

We have noted that some countries recently concluded a convention in Oslo on the total ban of anti-personnel landmines. China respects their sovereign choice and understands their humanitarian concerns. Meanwhile, China maintains that, in addressing the issue of anti-personnel landmines, both the humanitarian concerns and the legitimate security requirements of the countries concerned have to be taken into account. In the final analysis, security itself is an important aspect of humanitarian concerns.

On 26 June this year, the Chinese delegation to the Conference on Disarmament comprehensively elaborated the position of the Chinese Government on the issue of anti-personnel landmines. For the information of the Committee's members, and especially those that are not members of the Conference on Disarmament, we have made available a few copies of that statement on the table near the entrance of the room. However, I should like to point out that, since there have been certain new developments since 26 June, the Chinese delegation needs to consider further whether and how the Conference on Disarmament should address the issue of anti-personnel landmines. We are prepared to hear the views of other delegations on this matter.

I should now like to turn to the issue of international security. The two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century plunged mankind into unprecedented havoc. The cold war, which lasted for more than four decades in the latter half of this century, kept humanity under the dark shadow of the threat of war. With the advent of the twenty-first century, we now face an historic choice as to what kind of a world we should bring to the new century. The Chinese delegation holds that the international community should work to establish a just and rational new international political and economic order to ensure global and regional security. Such security should be based on necessary political and economic conditions and should have practical means to be achieved.

It is the view of the Chinese delegation that, as a political prerequisite for security, all countries should observe the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter as well as the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. Each country has the right to choose a development path according to its own national conditions. No country should interfere in the internal affairs of other countries on any grounds whatsoever, nor should any country or group of countries seek absolute security by compromising the security of others.

As the economic basis of security, all countries and regions should, on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, promote trade, economic and technological cooperation and scientific and cultural exchanges among themselves, with a view to narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor and achieving common prosperity and development.

As a practical way to achieve global and regional security and to maintain the world peace, all countries should strengthen consultation and cooperation in the field

of security, increase mutual understanding and trust, and seek to settle their differences and disputes by peaceful means.

International arms control and disarmament are closely related to security and should be mutually reinforcing. We therefore maintain that, first, international arms control and disarmament should reinforce the security of countries instead of weakening and undermining it. The focus of international arms control and disarmament should be on those issues with significant influence on international peace and security.

Secondly, the international community should continue to advance the process of multilateral arms control and disarmament. The existing international arms control and disarmament treaties should be further universalized and their faithful implementation and complete adherence by States parties ensured. Efforts should be made to create conditions conducive to the negotiation and conclusion of new treaties through the multilateral negotiating mechanisms with broad representation.

Thirdly, it is necessary to prevent a small number of countries taking advantage of their advanced military technology and economic power to seek their absolute security and military superiority over others while they focus the target of disarmament on the developing countries and deprive them of their legitimate right and means of self-defence.

Fourthly, the countries with the largest and most sophisticated conventional and nuclear arsenals should continue to bear special responsibility for disarmament.

Finally, the existing discriminatory and exclusive export control mechanisms and arrangements should be overhauled and rectified. A fair and rational international non-proliferation system should be established through negotiations, with the participation of all countries concerned. Parties to the relevant international legal instruments should utilize the procedures provided in these instruments, including dialogue and cooperation, to address any concern related to proliferation and to achieve the common objective of international non-proliferation. No country has the right to impose its own domestic laws on the international community, nor should it impose or threaten to impose sanctions at will.

China will continue to cooperate with all countries and make its due contribution to the further promotion of the international disarmament process to ensure the next century a peaceful and tranquil centenary.

Mr. Lukin (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): First, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on your election to the responsible post of Chairman of the First Committee and wish you success in your lofty task. It goes without saying that you can rely on the cooperation of the Russian delegation in fulfilling the tasks before you.

The cold war is a thing of the past, and the post-confrontation world is gradually becoming multipolar. Thanks to our joint efforts, the process of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, continues to develop, despite many difficulties and problems. These positive trends are clearly particularly important in terms of the fruitful work of the First Committee. On the other hand, because of the contradictions and transitional nature of the world today, the international community must continue to make persistent efforts in that direction, since if we hesitate on the road before us we may land back where we started.

Russia's main priority is still the establishment of a multipolar world free from blocs. One of the most significant success stories, if we look beyond Europe, has been the signing of the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Russian Federation in Paris in May. This was made possible by the fact that the leaders of the major countries of Europe and North America, in the current difficult situation, have shown the political will to accommodate mutual interests and find compromise solutions designed to keep the world from returning to confrontation.

We continue consistently to oppose the expansion of the North Atlantic Alliance as an outdated and, hence, counter-productive policy direction. However, we are combining this strong position with strenuous efforts effectively to turn the hidebound structures of the bloc system into an integral part of a pan-European and universal security system. It is particularly important today to prevent new divisions from emerging in Europe. We are ready to go down our part of the road. As the Committee knows, in May the President of Russia came up with an initiative whereby Russian nuclear systems would no longer be targeted at NATO countries. We have kept our promise.

Two major accomplishments in recent years have paved the way for a major breakthrough in the field of multilateral arms control and disarmament — the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear

Weapons (NPT) in 1995; and the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The latter has already been signed by more than 140 States. We are convinced that this instrument, which frees humankind from the threat of any nuclear explosion, will effectively contribute to strengthening the non-proliferation regime and will be an effective obstacle to qualitative improvements in nuclear arsenals.

It is extremely important now to make this agreement truly universal. We hope that all countries, including those with the capability to develop nuclear weapons and whose signature is of major importance for the entry into force of this historic agreement, will sign the Treaty.

Russia welcomes the results of this year's first session of the Preparatory Committee of the NPT Review Conference. We attach paramount importance to a comprehensive and objective review of the Treaty that is one of the cornerstones of the global security system and the development of international cooperation. We particularly appreciate the fact that the Preparatory Committee began discussing substantive issues right at the outset and even reached a consensus agreement on a number of important elements that can form the basis for its recommendations on those issues. We support the continuation of this work.

We have repeatedly expressed our willingness to work consistently with other nuclear-weapon States to encourage all members of the "nuclear club" to reduce their nuclear arsenals and ultimately to eliminate them.

I would like once again to recall the proposals of the Russian President to ensure that nuclear arsenals are stationed only on the territory of nuclear-weapon Powers. Russia, for its part, has resolved this problem. In cooperation with Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, the nuclear weapons that remained on their territory after the demise of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics have been withdrawn to the Russian Federation with a view to eliminating them.

We feel that the Conference on Disarmament should begin negotiations on a multilateral convention on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. It is high time for such a convention in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. As early as 1993 the General Assembly reached consensus on drafting and concluding such a convention. The Conference on Disarmament has adopted a mandate for the respective negotiations and established a special negotiating body. We are convinced that it is time to activate this mechanism.

As is well-known, Russia has already stopped producing weapons-grade uranium. A national programme to stop the production of weapons-grade plutonium will be implemented by 1998.

A new initiative put forward by President Boris Yeltsin in his address to delegates at the anniversary session of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference is yet further proof that we are as good as our word. The decision gradually to remove up to 500 tons of highly enriched uranium and up to 50 tons of weapons-grade plutonium from nuclear military programmes is an effective contribution by Russia to ensuring that nuclear disarmament is irreversible.

The 1972 Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM) is of paramount importance to nuclear disarmament as a key element of strategic stability and a prerequisite for further reductions in strategic offensive arms. In this regard, I would like to note with satisfaction the substantial progress made in resolving the issue of strengthening this Treaty, namely, the recent signing in New York of the package of agreements on demarcation between strategic and non-strategic ABM systems. The agreements, which were jointly drawn up by Russia, the United States, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, reaffirm our States' commitment to the ABM Treaty, and their determination to prevent it from being circumvented and preserve the positive impact the Treaty has on strategic stability and security. These agreements offer new opportunities for Russia and the United States to work together to attain the goal set by the Presidents of the two countries in Helsinki — to reduce the two countries' nuclear weapons to 80 per cent below the cold-war level.

Furthermore, in accordance with the Russian-American agreement, the work of experts on the START III Treaty will be continued, while full-scale START III negotiations, as was decided at the Helsinki Summit, will commence immediately after the START II Treaty enters into force. We expect this work to produce early and tangible results. The Russian Parliament closely links the ratification of the START II Treaty with specific and visible progress towards the conclusion of the START III Treaty.

We are convinced that the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world contributes significantly to the

enhancement of stability and security, and also promotes the narrowing of the sphere of nuclear preparations.

We support, in particular, the ideas of our Belorussian and Ukrainian friends concerning the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe.

Russia's position remains unchanged concerning the requirement that the rules of international law be strictly observed in negotiating nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties.

Russia advocates that mankind be fully liberated from the threat of chemical weapons. We welcome the entry into force last April of the Convention on the prohibition and destruction of these barbaric weapons of mass destruction. The Convention has been submitted to the State Duma for ratification. The Duma is now actively engaged in work aimed at the ratification of this important international agreement. In its appeal [A/52/137, annex II] to the Conference of States Parties to the Convention, the Duma stated its intention to complete the ratification process, possibly this autumn. I hope this will be done in the nearest future. Although the Duma is still debating this issue, I can assure the Committee that Russia will not stay outside the international community's efforts to get rid of chemical weapons.

Russia continues to support proposals aimed at the strengthening of the regime of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) through the establishment of its verification mechanism. We would like the negotiations on this issue to result in the creation of a system to verify compliance with the Convention that would be reliable, not burdensome, and based on objective criteria. It is important that as a result of this work the Convention be strengthened, but not revised.

Russians share and understand the sufferings of people in many parts of the world who become victims of dangerous landmines. Over a hundred thousand explosive devices are detected and destroyed annually in the territory of Russia, and the direct costs of these operations exceed $25 million dollars per year.

Speaking in Strasbourg at the end of last week, Russia's President reaffirmed our positive attitude, in principle, to signing a convention banning anti-personnel landmines, once the necessary conditions have been created. This will undoubtedly happen in coordination with other interested countries and with due regard for all objective circumstances.

The Russian Federation is in favour of making gradual progress towards this goal, which should include a number of agreed time stages, while viable alternatives to this type of defensive weapon are developed. As we see it, the main tasks at this stage are to bring into force the new Protocol II on mines to the 1980 Convention on inhumane weapons, ensure the broadest possible participation in it of members of the world community and see that there is strict observance of the norms and standards it provides. This document is based on a careful balance of the interests of States, taking into account their actual capabilities, security interests and self-defence needs.

We clearly understand and in many respects share the humanitarian focus of the efforts to prohibit anti-personnel landmines. However, a hasty prohibition of landmines not accompanied by measures to strengthen stability, could have a negative impact, including on anti-terrorist activities. The proper forum for the discussion of the subject of landmines is the Conference on Disarmament, where it is possible to carry out an in-depth study and discussion of the entire set of respective problems, including from the standpoint of their impact on the strengthening the security of interested States and international security in general. This, as experience has shown, is a difficult task to accomplish on the "fast track" of a short-term diplomatic process.

We in Russia positively assess the results of the work on the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). We are pleased to note that it has become possible to a great extent to implement the Russian-American agreements in this respect reached in Helsinki and Denver. The adopted document defines the areas of accord and sets the major directions for further work. What is important is that it draws the basic contours of the future conventional armaments verification regime in Europe in a new geopolitical environment. Now we have to maintain and increase the momentum of the negotiations in Vienna and get on with them without wasting time.

We are pursuing a consistent policy of enhancing transparency in armaments. Since 1993 we have been submitting our data on a regular basis to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We consider that ensuring the widest possible participation of United Nations Member States in the operation of this important instrument is one of the major tasks of the day.

In conclusion, I would like to say a few words about the mechanism for discussing disarmament issues in the United Nations and conducting multilateral negotiations in

this field. I think many members would agree that this year we are faced with a certain deviation in the multilateral negotiating process. The problem is not only the Conference on Disarmament, which, due to a whole number of linkages insisted upon by various countries, failed to commence negotiations on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials and landmines this year.

What is even more disappointing is that there are those who attempt to make use of these difficulties to undermine the role of the Conference as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, and to take a "fast track" of special forums, which, as experience has shown, is not capable of taking into account the security interests of all countries. We are against such a cutting of corners. We are convinced that only patient work within the Conference on Disarmament can lead to such achievements as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on the prohibition of biological and toxin weapons, the Convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the many other important international agreements elaborated in this forum. We think it important that the General Assembly reaffirm the role of the Conference on Disarmament this year. I think that the United Nations Secretariat should also organize its work in such a way as to give this forum the attention it deserves.

In conclusion, I would like to state that the new democratic Russia remains committed to the great cause of disarmament, and is willing to work hard to unravel the most intricate knots with a view to liberating mankind from excessive weapons threatening the very existence of our planet.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): I would like to express my satisfaction at seeing you, Sir, a distinguished representative of Botswana, as Chairman of the First Committee. It has often been a pleasure working together with Botswana in multilateral forums, not only because chance has made us alphabetical neighbours, but also because Botswana has, like Brazil, been a country whose actions are directed to furthering the cause of peace and international security.

I also want to pay tribute to Ambassador Sychou of Belarus for the effective way in which he led the Committee at the fifty-first session.

During the current year we have witnessed some progress in the area of disarmament. Perhaps the most important development was the Oslo Diplomatic Conference, which adopted the text of a Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines. Brazil is committed to the Ottawa process and intends to sign the anti-personnel landmine Convention in December.

It is important to note the close cooperation between Latin American countries during the Ottawa process, yet another sign that our region enjoys conditions favourable to harmony and peace.

As Brazil's Minister of External Relations, Ambassador Luiz Felipe Lampreia, affirmed in his statement to the General Assembly, the agenda of the Latin American and Caribbean countries is focused on the process of regional integration and on the development of ever-closer links between our societies. Defence procurement in our region aims basically at the replacement of obsolete equipment. Frequently, even effective participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations requires some increase in military-related spending, such as is the case, for instance, with logistic equipment in support of lengthy deployment overseas.

What we witness in our region is an increase in military cooperation between neighbouring countries. Today, as we speak, units of the armies of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, and observers from Paraguay, are undertaking the second Southern Cross Operation, a simulation of a field peacekeeping operation, that will be inspected on 16 October by the Presidents of Brazil and Uruguay. This operation is evidence of the increased confidence that the process of integration has brought to our region.

Latin American military expenditures are the lowest in the world in per capita terms. On other continents however, where the average spending is already much higher, some countries that are members of military alliances are being urged to upgrade their inventory, modernize their armed forces, make their equipment compatible with that of their allies, and, in brief, to rearm and spend more. This is a regrettable tendency that we feel should be discouraged.

Despite the progress we have witnessed, we should not remain silent with regard to a worrisome situation, namely, the unlimited development of non-conventional, non-nuclear, new forms of armament that threaten the international community's reiterated disarmament goals. We believe that some caution should be exercised. Self-restraint is necessary in order to avoid a new arms race in sophisticated weaponry between the great military Powers.

In this pursuit of limiting the development of new weapons, it is also essential to strengthen the prohibition regimes established by the Conventions on biological and chemical weapons. We are confident that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, under the able direction of the Brazilian Director-General, Ambassador Jose Mauricio Bustani, will continue to make strides towards the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. In this regard, we welcome the assurance by President Boris Yeltsin that the Russian Federation remains committed to the ratification of the Convention as soon as possible.

Since we met last year Brazil has undertaken a number of initiatives relevant to the First Committee's deliberations. On 7 November 1996 the Brazilian Government presented to the nation a new national defence policy. I would like to emphasize some of its principles and goals. The new national defence policy is intended, *inter alia*,

> "to contribute actively to the establishment of an international order based on the rule of law that will provide regional and universal peace and the sustainable development of mankind;
>
> "to promote Brazil's stance in favour of global disarmament, conditioned on the destruction of nuclear arsenals and other weapons of mass destruction, in a multilaterally negotiated process;
>
> "to take part in international peacekeeping operations;
>
> "to work towards the maintenance of a peaceful and cooperative environment along national borders and to contribute to solidarity in Latin America and the South Atlantic".

A most significant decision in connection with disarmament and non-proliferation was taken on 20 June of this year by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, when the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was submitted to the Brazilian Congress for approval.

The Brazilian position on nuclear disarmament is well known. The option of acquiring nuclear weapons was renounced long ago. Brazil actively participated in the negotiation of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean — the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Later, the Congress decided to include in the Constitution of 1988 additional prohibition clauses regarding such weapons. Indeed, Brazil is one of the few countries in the world that has such a prohibition inscribed in its Constitution.

The same renunciation has been reaffirmed in other legally binding international instruments, namely, the bilateral agreement on nuclear cooperation with Argentina, the Quadripartite Safeguards Agreement, to which the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is a party, and, recently, the entry into force of the amendments to the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

In acceding to the NPT, Brazil intends to contribute further to the cause of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. As President Cardoso stated in his message to the Brazilian Congress, Brazil knows:

> "the NPT by itself does not represent a definitive solution to the problem of nuclear weapons."

The Treaty was conceived in the 1960s as a temporary solution to the problem of nuclear proliferation, which could have led to increasing numbers of nuclear-armed countries and multiplication of the risks of nuclear confrontation. Along with many other countries, Brazil stressed then that the nuclear-arms race was not compatible with article VI of that Treaty.

Developments in the past decade, since the 1987 Treaty on intermediate-range nuclear forces between the United States and the Soviet Union, have both reflected and accelerated change in this scenario. Nuclear weapons, once considered a cornerstone of security for military alliances, are increasingly seen as a source of unnecessary risk and expense. Enlightened public opinion in the nuclear-weapon States is coming to consider them an embarrassment.

International public opinion increasingly realizes, first, that nuclear weapons have no military utility other than — perhaps — to deter other nuclear weapons, and, secondly, that a world in which nuclear arsenals are sharply reduced and eventually eliminated will be safer for all.

From its position of authority in the international system, the International Court of Justice has delivered a clear Advisory Opinion denying legal legitimacy to atomic weaponry. Further, the Court concluded that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international control.

In the more practical realm of national defence needs, the campaign led in this country by Generals Lee Butler and Andrew Goodpaster has done as much against claims of military utility. Their positions support the conclusions reached two years ago by the Canberra Commission, to which I had the honour to belong. After examining the question of the possible usefulness of nuclear weapons, the Commission reached the unanimous conclusion that nuclear weapons diminished the security of all States, including States that possess them. The sole way out of the present and unacceptable situation is to take progressive steps that will lead to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

In spite of the solemn commitments accepted under the NPT, some still argue that the prohibition of nuclear weapons is unfeasible. This should not be so, and indeed it is not so. A recent report of the United States National Academy of Sciences notes that what is unthinkable is the possibility that the current unstable situation can be left unattended without major risks to our own and future generations.

The draft resolution that Brazil and a group of like-minded countries intend to submit this year on a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere, focusing on the promotion of cooperation between the four nuclear-free zones for the shared goals of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, is a step in that direction. We expect to consult with all interested delegations in the coming weeks with a view to achieving broad support for that draft.

One of the major challenges of our time is to effectively eliminate nuclear weapons. We see the NPT, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the four nuclear-weapon-free zone Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba and the recognition of a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere as steps towards the goal of freeing mankind from the nightmare of nuclear destruction.

A world free from nuclear weapons: that is the stand that Brazil will continue to defend here in the First Committee, at the Conference on Disarmament and, hopefully soon, in the Review Conference of the NPT to be held in the year 2000.

Mr. Bune (Fiji): The Fiji delegation is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over this Committee, and we would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. We wish to assure you of our full cooperation during your tenure of office.

The international community has witnessed significant progress in the area of disarmament and international security. We have moved from the pinnacle of a world holocaust to laying the foundations for disarmament and secure and lasting peace in our world. Significant advances have been made in the establishment and consolidation of international legal instruments and the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We have seen the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We have witnessed the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We have seen the establishment of the African nuclear-weapon-free zone and efforts to establish a zone in South-East Asia, which will add to similar zones in other parts of the world. The Chemical Weapons Convention has come into force, and efforts are being made to strengthen the prohibition against biological weapons. There has been recent progress in the effort to reduce and eliminate landmines.

We have indeed made significant progress towards disarmament, but we still have a long way to go to achieve our goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world, prohibition of the production of weapons of mass destruction, and general disarmament.

The international community last year hailed the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. My country, Fiji, was among the first to sign the Treaty and was also the first to ratify it. In the interest of lasting peace and security on our planet and in the interest of all mankind, we would urge all States which have not done so yet to sign and ratify the Treaty. The Treaty will be meaningless, however, unless we pursue the rapid and positive implementation of its provisions. We therefore deplore the recent announcement by one nuclear-weapon State that it will conduct a series of "sub-critical" underground nuclear tests, which, in our view, represent a blatant disregard of the expressed concerns of the international community.

In the final analysis, the CTBT, the NPT and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones are only steps forward. We must aim at, we must work towards and we must have the political will to agree to, the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The Fiji delegation calls on all nuclear-weapon States to end the production of nuclear weapons, to end the stockpiling of nuclear weapons, and to destroy current stockpiles of nuclear weapons. We also call on the international community to begin negotiations as soon as

possible on a treaty for the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free world.

It is to be regretted that the current momentum in the disarmament process has been severely hampered this year because of basic disagreements in Geneva over the work programme of the Conference on Disarmament. We urge all parties, especially the nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States, to do their utmost to quickly reach agreement on the work programme, as the continuing impasse will expose this single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament to further risks of its being stepped over, as proved by the recent agreements reached on the CTBT and anti-personnel landmines.

The Chemical Weapons Convention has now come into force, and the international community should work towards ensuring its full implementation. We call on all States that produce or have the capability to produce chemical weapons to sign and ratify the Convention.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction remains an academic document. The Fiji delegation urges the international community to move with greater speed to conclude a verification protocol.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, negotiated at the Diplomatic Conference in Oslo last month, is a significant advance in the collaborative efforts of the international community and civil society in the area of disarmament. The Convention is a recognition that anti-personnel landmines are an abhorrence in our civilization today and must be totally prohibited. Now that a Convention has been produced, we must act to sign and ratify it in order to give it and its provisions validity. Fiji looks forward to signing the Convention in Ottawa on 3 December 1997. We call on major Powers, in particular the United States and China, to demonstrate their global leadership role by joining the rest of the international community in signing the treaty.

The international community must now cooperate and collaborate with great speed to remove the millions of landmines that are planted in many parts of our world.

The production and transfer of fissile materials for the manufacture of nuclear weapons pose a threat to our efforts for nuclear-weapons disarmament. The Fiji delegation calls for the establishment of a fissile-material inventory and for the negotiation and conclusion of a fissile-material cut-off treaty.

As far as conventional weapons are concerned, Fiji calls for the implementation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

While the world may have progressed from the brink of a possible Third World War during the cold-war era, the increasing number of intra-State conflicts now constitute the most pressing threat to international peace and security. These intra-State conflicts not only give rise to large-scale displacement of persons and genocide, but also cause massive transboundary refugee flows which impact severely on the social and economic relations within receiving countries throughout the North and South. We therefore welcome and support current efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures at regional and subregional levels in order to ease tensions and conflicts, especially in the Balkans and in Central Africa.

The inability of international organizations to respond quickly to conflict situations clearly indicates that the international community is ill-prepared to deal with intra-State conflicts and is generally inclined to manage conflicts rather than to prevent them. The Fiji delegation therefore renews its call for the establishment of a permanent mechanism or unit of preventive diplomacy that can respond promptly, positively and peacefully to potential conflicts and threats of genocide. Such a unit or mechanism should have the capacity to receive, collate, analyse and interpret intelligence information and reports, with a view to early detection of potential conflicts, and early reaction to minimize, contain and resolve such conflicts, in collaboration with relevant Member States.

Fiji warmly welcomes and supports the proposal by the Secretary-General, contained in his report on the reform of the United Nations, to set up a new United Nations Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation in New York. For a small island developing State like Fiji, given the concomitant budget constraints, strengthening the coordinating role here in New York would have cost benefits and be most useful in a number of other ways. But, most important, we believe that the decision to reconstitute the Centre for Disarmament Affairs into a revitalized Department of Disarmament and Arms Regulation at United Nations Headquarters is long overdue and reflects the determination of the majority of Member States to place the issue of disarmament at the centre of United Nations concerns.

We also welcome and support the proposal to review the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and this Committee with a view to updating, rationalizing and streamlining their work.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that it behoves us all, individually and collectively, to move from a culture of conflict to a culture of peace and international security, for the benefit of all mankind.

Mr. García (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation wishes to begin by conveying to you, Sir, its warmest congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. We feel certain that under your able leadership our deliberations will be successful. You may count on our full cooperation in contributing to the achievement of this goal.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to Ambassador Alyaksandr Sychou for his able leadership of the Committee during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

At the outset, my delegation wishes to express its full support for the agreements reached on disarmament issues by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and heads of delegation of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries at their meeting held on 25 September 1997.

The most significant events of the past year on matters within the purview of the First Committee include the following: first, the entry into force last April of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which more than 100 States are parties; secondly, the holding of the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); thirdly, the fact that, following the first anniversary of its opening for signature, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) now has more than 148 signatory States; and fourthly, the encouraging progress made with respect to the negotiations on and the adoption of the text of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

We must acknowledge certain troublesome facts, however, *inter alia*, the state of virtual paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament. Nor have we to date noted any significant steps in the direction indicated by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion on the "Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons", with respect to the obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. If no substantive progress is made in this regard, the credibility of the NPT will be weakened, along with its potential for universality.

My delegation supports the establishment within the Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee to begin negotiations on a phased programme for nuclear disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time-frame. Likewise, we reiterate our support for the proposed programme of action for nuclear disarmament in accordance with the criteria set forth by the Group of 21 within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament.

We note also the emergence of important initiatives similar to those that resulted in the establishment, by the Antarctic Treaty and the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok, of nuclear-weapon-free zones. These include initiatives put forward by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, and another by Mongolia for the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that country.

My country supports the initiatives aimed at freeing the southern hemisphere of nuclear weapons. It supports also the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

Of concern is the fact that last year, for the first time in recent years, arms sales increased. The arms race consumes many of the resources that could otherwise be devoted to the economic and social development of the developing countries.

My delegation considers the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms to be of major importance and wishes to highlight its recommendations aimed at preventing the excessive accumulation and the transfer of small arms and light weapons in certain regions of the world.

The Panel stressed the need for all States to implement the recommendations contained in the guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991, adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1996. It also

emphasized that all States and the relevant regional and international organizations should intensify their cooperation efforts to combat all aspects of illicit trafficking, and that the United Nations should encourage the adoption and implementation of regional and subregional moratoriums, where appropriate, on the transfer and manufacture of small arms and light weapons. Finally, the Panel recommended that the United Nations consider the possibility of convening an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, in order to tackle the issues identified in the report that was submitted.

My delegation notes with particular interest the proposals put forward during the Bamako conference, held in November 1996, on a moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of light weapons. We also noted with interest the ministerial-level consultations that resulted in the adoption of a document on the declaration of a moratorium, including the establishment of a mechanism known as the programme for coordination and assistance on disarmament and security. These initiatives could be taken into consideration in other regions of the world, particularly in areas of conflict, and the moratoriums extended to other weapons, including high-technology ones. That was precisely the framework in which the President of Colombia, Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, formulated the idea on that issue that he presented to the General Assembly on 25 September last.

We take note of the report on the operation and further development of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts in this area. We believe that the Arms Register would better achieve its goal as a confidence-building measure if its scope were extended to other weapons, including light weapons. Furthermore, it should not be limited to information on imports and exports but should incorporate data on manufacturing and on existing stockpiles.

We fully agree with the Secretary-General's view that for the Register to fulfil its potential it is important not only to increase participation in it but also to expand its scope. In this regard, we regret that after considering all proposed new categories and types of weapons to be added to the Register the Group of Experts could not reach agreement on those proposals.

My delegation wishes to reiterate its support for the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We are convinced that such a session would be the appropriate forum to study future action on issues of disarmament and arms control and other international-security issues. We are also convinced of the importance of multilateralism in the process of disarmament and of the need to guarantee full participation by all members of the international community in the preparation of a fourth special session and in the session itself. We note with interest the progress in the Disarmament Commission towards achieving agreement on the objectives and agenda of a fourth special session. We have noted an evolution in the positions on this issue, which encourages us to persevere in our active and constructive participation in the search for consensus.

Finally, my delegation wishes to welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to establish a Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation. We are certain that administrative reforms should allow the Secretariat to respond effectively to the disarmament priorities of Member States, as set out in the relevant resolutions and mandates of the General Assembly.

Since these are relevant issues on our agenda, we are willing to continue this open and constructive dialogue on the work of the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission with a view to enabling those bodies to play their proper role in the work of the Organization.

The Chairman: I call on the observer of Switzerland.

Mr. Hofer (Switzerland) (*interpretation from French*): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-second session, and to assure you of the full support of the Swiss delegation. Your assumption of the chairmanship as the representative of an African country comes at an auspicious time, for the countries of your continent have played an important, indeed decisive, role on the issue of conventional weapons, specifically in the fight against anti-personnel landmines. We are thus gratified to be able to cooperate with you here.

As we assess developments in the sphere of disarmament since the fifty-first session and as we seek to decide on the strategy to adopt for the coming year, we cannot but note that we are now in a period of transition where ample progress is being achieved in many areas of international security. On the other hand, this progress is too often a mere stage in, or a beginning of, a negotiating process, because of fresh information or because of new requirements on the part of the international community — which is however unable to reach the goals it has set itself.

On the basis of that observation, I wish to address three topics in my statement today: institutional questions, weapons of mass destruction, and conventional weapons, including anti-personnel landmines.

Turning first to institutional matters, let me take note of the sections on disarmament in the report of the Secretary-General on the reform of the United Nations, contained in document A/51/950. As the Swiss Government affirmed during the Secretary-General's recent visit to Bern, my country fully supports the priorities and proposals set out in that report. Moreover, regarding the division of labour between New York and Geneva, Switzerland has expressed its desire that the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament should be given the necessary flexibility on the allocation and level of available resources to meet the needs of ongoing negotiations, including those relating to disarmament but taking place outside the Conference on Disarmament. The Swiss authorities have reaffirmed their readiness to host follow-up conferences and meetings stemming from disarmament instruments entrusted, in one way or another, to the United Nations.

Still in the institutional context, we note with regret that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to begin substantive negotiations at its last session. As a new member of the Conference, we have the greatest respect for the impressive achievements of that body, which is responsible for all the essential universal instruments in the sphere of disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament should thus take care lest its historic baggage become too unwieldy and prevent it from finding rapid and effective responses to future challenges.

In our view, then, the Conference on Disarmament must end the phase of reorientation and deliberation and return to the path of genuine negotiations based on common political will. If it does not do so, it will quite simply run the risk of being sidestepped by the international community, which would then look for other ways to reach its objectives in the area of international security. Switzerland wants therefore to urge the Conference on Disarmament early next year to take on a new identity — whose features have already been partially mapped out by the four coordinators appointed at the last session of the Conference.

The paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament leads me to my next subject: weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, widely diverging views on which continue to weigh on the work of the Conference. The policy of Switzerland on this matter is well known. We do not believe that nuclear disarmament is an end in itself, but rather a means to consolidate international security. That objective remains to be achieved, through the gradual, parallel establishment of stable balance at a constantly diminishing level of armaments, while aiming for the complete, universal dismantling of nuclear weapons.

This approach gives rise, in our view, to a number of conclusions on the various negotiations under way. First of all, we see as legitimate the efforts to open the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament to the question of nuclear disarmament. Those efforts seem to be based on two major concerns, which we also share: the existence of a wish, despite the major quantitative reductions of recent years, for the retention of a mass-destruction capability that no longer reflects the present state of cooperation in the security sphere; and fear at the continued situation of inequality among members of the international community.

On the other hand, we are not convinced that a multilateral framework is the most suitable for taking effective decisions on the pace and substance of a reduction of existing nuclear arsenals. Rather, it is necessary to ratify and implement START II as soon as possible so as to open up the way for later negotiations on further important reductions.

Finally, we are of the view that the Conference on Disarmament should devise a mechanism to enable its members to be kept up to date on new developments in the area of nuclear disarmament, and at the same time, to be a solid basis for launching negotiations in a related area — halting the production of fissile materials for military purposes, known as the "cut-off".

It is in this spirit that Switzerland is taking part in other activities in the nuclear sector, such as those of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference in 2000 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), whose second session will take place in Geneva in April next year. We are continuing, furthermore, our active involvement in the context of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), for whose Organization the Provisional Technical Secretariat was established last spring in Vienna. Also in the nuclear sphere, my Government supports the efforts to extend the network of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We welcome in particular the prospect of the establishment of such a zone in Central Asia.

While little progress has been seen — at least in the nuclear context — we can note with pleasure that in another area important developments have taken place. Here I refer

to negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group, under the highly regarded leadership of Ambassador Tibor Toth of Hungary, to strengthen the Convention on the prohibition of biological weapons, especially through a protocol establishing a verification institution. The Fourth Review Conference for this Convention, held in Geneva at the end of 1996, gave a new political impetus to that Group, which now has a text which has evolved far enough — we hope — to be adopted during 1999. Switzerland, for its part, supports the efforts to intensify negotiations with a view to conforming to this timetable.

Another encouraging development in the past year has been the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Switzerland is an active participant and is in charge of training some of the first inspectors for the new organization in The Hague. While it is gradually getting its work started, we still await ratification of that Convention by, in particular, the Russian Federation, which still has a substantial stock of chemical weapons. Switzerland appeals to all States which have not yet done so to ratify the Convention.

We do not forget that in spite of the harmful potential of weapons of mass destruction, which are a great threat, the majority of human tragedies result from the use of conventional weapons, the third and last subject of my statement. I begin with anti-personnel landmines.

The Oslo Conference to bring about a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines concluded on 18 September with the adoption of a convention prohibiting the production, use, stockpiling and transfer of those weapons. The credit for this result, which marks an important advance in international humanitarian law, goes in large part to the President of the Oslo Conference, Ambassador Selebi of South Africa; the Foreign Minister of Norway, organizer of the Conference; and the delegation of Austria, which, with the assistance of some other countries, prepared a draft convention serving as a basis for the Oslo talks.

The next stage in the process, set in motion in a remarkable manner by Canada, will be the signing of the agreed text in Oslo at the beginning of December in Ottawa. It is imperative that this text enjoy the adherence of the largest possible number of States, for in the long term only a universal ban will enable humankind to free itself finally from the scourge of anti-personnel landmines. Until this universality is achieved, it is desirable that States ratify Amended Protocol II to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. It is true that this instrument leaves much to be desired, but until we have general implementation of the Convention negotiated in Oslo Amended Protocol II can mitigate the suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines.

In the final analysis, the long-term success of the text of the Convention, which will be opened for signature at the beginning of December, will depend on two elements: the removal and destruction of existing anti-personnel landmines, especially those which have been deployed by the millions throughout the world, often in the framework of internal conflicts, without their precise location being known; and the universality of a total ban on anti-personnel landmines — that is, the broadest possible ratification of the new Convention. I would like in this regard to highlight the encouraging statement made by the President of the Russian Federation last week in Strasbourg.

In realizing the objective of universality, the assistance of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and other United Nations bodies could be useful, as could efforts of individual States which took part in the Ottawa process. Switzerland commits itself to continue tirelessly its work for a world free of anti-personnel landmines. This commitment will take, among other things, the form of increased action in mine clearance and the rehabilitation of victims.

The Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects — the legal instrument which I have just mentioned in the context of anti-personnel landmines — covers, with its additional Protocols, the use of specific weapons in armed conflicts. It was conceived in the form of a treaty framework which could be regularly updated in the light of the latest technological developments.

In the preparatory meetings for the Convention's Review Conference a Swiss proposal was discussed at meetings of experts on limiting the undesirable effect of projectiles. The priority given to regulating laser weapons and amending the Protocol on mines did not allow us to turn our attention to the ballistic issue. The final declaration of the Review Conference on 3 May 1996 did, however, encourage participating States to consider the elaboration of a new protocol. In this context, last week, from 7 to 8 October, Switzerland organized an international seminar on the traumatic effects of ballistic weapons. Almost 100 delegates took part, from more than 50 States and various non-governmental organizations. The main goal of that workshop was to make an objective appraisal, with the presence of international experts, of the problem of the use

of small-calibre weapons and ammunition that cause excessive suffering.

For more than 100 years there have been restrictions on the use of projectiles — explosive bullets and dumdum bullets — for humanitarian reasons. The workshop heightened the awareness of participants of the reason for weighing the military need for these weapons against humanitarian considerations, and to update the restrictions because of the excessive suffering that the weapons cause.

Switzerland will prepare a detailed document on this seminar and will ensure that it is distributed in the appropriate forums.

In conclusion, I should like to recall that Switzerland is prepared to cooperate closely with the United Nations for increased international security, with a lower and more balanced level of armaments, so as to reduce suffering.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.